

Little Snake Field Office Resource Management Plan Revision

Proposed Sagebrush Habitat Protections

The Little Snake Field Office contains some of the highest priority sagebrush habitats in Colorado.

The Proposed Plan would minimize habitat fragmentation in high and medium priority sagebrush habitats through a voluntary incentive program on existing oil and gas leases and required stipulations on new oil and gas leases.

- These incentives and stipulations would apply to the more than 500,000 acres of high priority sagebrush habitat administered by the Field Office
- They would apply to the 1.5 million acres of medium priority habitat administered by the Field Office

Voluntary incentives for existing leases

Oil and gas operators with existing leases in high and medium priority sagebrush could receive exceptions to wildlife timing limitations if they voluntarily limit surface disturbance to five percent of a lease and provide BLM with a Plan of Development illustrating a strategy to maintain large blocks of un-fragmented sagebrush habitat.

Mandatory requirements on new leases

For new leases, surface disturbance thresholds would be mandatory based on priority of the sagebrush habitat:

- In the highest priority sagebrush habitats, or “core areas” (as defined by Colorado Division of Wildlife), oil and gas operators would have to keep their disturbance below one percent of the lease. They would be required to submit a Plan of Development detailed above.
- For medium priority habitats, operators would be required to keep oil and gas related disturbance to less than five percent of the lease and submit a Plan of Development detailed above.

Existing leases that expire would be subject to these new requirements.

Sage grouse leks (breeding areas) would be protected with a 0.6 mile no surface occupancy buffer, an increase from the 0.25 mile proposed in the Draft Plan.

